IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

Listing of Claims

1. (Canceled).

2. (Previously Presented) A method for producing a hydrogen-absorbing alloy for batteries which comprises a first step of grinding a hydrogen-absorbing alloy comprising at least one rare earth element, nickel and at least one transition metal to prepare alloy powders, a second step of treating the alloy powders in an alkaline aqueous solution, a third step of treating the alloy powders in an acidic aqueous solution, and a fourth step of a dehydrogenation treatment to remove hydrogen absorbed in the alloy powders in the presence of acetate ion in an aqueous solution.

3. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 2, wherein the dehydrogenation treatment is carried out using oxygen as a dehydrogenating agent and comprises stirring the alloy powders in the aqueous solution with blowing air or oxygen into the aqueous solution.

4. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 2, wherein the dehydrogenation treatment is carried out using a peroxide represented by the formula B_2O_2 (in which B denotes H, Li, Na or K) as a dehydrogenating agent and comprises stirring the alloy powders in the aqueous solution with adding the peroxide to the aqueous solution.

5. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 4, wherein the peroxide is aqueous hydrogen peroxide.

6. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 5, wherein the aqueous hydrogen peroxide is added in an amount of 0.2-4.0% by weight in terms of hydrogen peroxide based on the alloy powder.

7. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 5, wherein the temperature of the aqueous solution when the aqueous hydrogen peroxide is added is 30-80° C.

8. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 2, wherein the dehydrogenation treatment is carried out using a peroxodisulfate represented by the formula $D_2S_2O_8$ (in which D denotes Li, Na or K) as a dehydrogenating agent and comprises

stirring the alloy powders in an aqueous solution with adding the peroxodisulfate.

9-10. (Canceled).

11. (Previously Presented) A method for producing a hydrogen-absorbing alloy for batteries which comprises a first step of grinding a hydrogen-absorbing alloy containing at least one rare earth element, nickel and at least one transition metal to prepare alloy powders, a second step of treating the alloy powders in an alkaline aqueous solution, a third step of treating the alloy powders in an acidic aqueous solution, a fourth step of a dehydrogenation treatment to remove hydrogen absorbed in the alloy powders in the presence of acetate ion in an aqueous solution, and a fifth step of adding an alkali to the aqueous solution.

12. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 11, wherein pH of the aqueous solution is adjusted to 10-14 by the addition of the alkali in the fifth step.

13. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 11, wherein pH of the aqueous solution is adjusted to 11-13 by the addition of the alkali in the fifth step.

14-17 (Canceled).

18. (New) A method for producing a hydrogen-absorbing electrode, said method comprising:

(a) producing a hydrogen-absorbing alloy by a first step of grinding a hydrogen-absorbing alloy comprising at least one rare earth element, nickel and at least one transition metal to prepare alloy powders, a second step of treating the alloy powders in an alkaline aqueous solution, a third step of treating the alloy powders in an acidic aqueous solution, and a fourth step of a dehydrogenation treatment to remove hydrogen absorbed in the alloy powders in the presence of acetate ion in an aqueous solution;

(b) kneading said hydrogen-absorbing alloy produced according to step (a) with a thickening agent or binder and water to prepare a paste; and

(c) coating the paste on a metallic substrate.

19. (New) The method according to claim 18, wherein the dehydrogenation treatment is carried out using oxygen as a dehydrogenating agent and comprises stirring the alloy powders in the aqueous solution with blowing air or oxygen into the aqueous solution.

20. (New) The method according to claim 18, wherein the dehydrogenation treatment is carried out using a peroxide represented by the formula B_2O_2 (in which B denotes H, Li, Na or K) as a dehydrogenating agent and comprises stirring the alloy powders in the aqueous solution with adding the peroxide to the aqueous solution.

21. (New) The method according to claim 20, wherein the peroxide is aqueous hydrogen peroxide.

22. (New) The method according to claim 21, wherein the aqueous hydrogen peroxide is added in an amount of 0.2-4.0% by weight in terms of hydrogen peroxide based on the alloy powder.

23. (New) The method according to claim 20, wherein the temperature of the aqueous solution when the aqueous hydrogen peroxide is added is 30-80° C.

24. (New) The method according to claim 18, wherein the dehydrogenation treatment is carried out using a peroxodisulfate represented by the formula $D_2S_2O_8$ (in which D denotes Li, Na or K) as a dehydrogenating agent and comprises stirring the alloy powders in an aqueous solution with adding the peroxodisulfate.

25. (New) A method for producing a hydrogen-absorbing electrode, said method comprising:

(a) producing a hydrogen-absorbing alloy for batteries by a first step of grinding a hydrogen-absorbing alloy containing at least one rare earth element, nickel and at least one transition metal to prepare alloy powders, a second step of treating the alloy powders in an alkaline aqueous solution, a third step of treating the alloy powders in an acidic aqueous solution, a fourth step of a dehydrogenation treatment to remove hydrogen absorbed in the alloy powders in the presence of acetate ion in an aqueous solution, and a fifth step of adding an alkali to the aqueous solution;

(b) kneading the hydrogen-absorbing alloy produced by step (a) with a thickening agent or binder and water to prepare a paste and

(c) coating the paste on a metallic substrate.

26. (New) The method according to claim 25, wherein pH of the aqueous solution is adjusted to 10-14 by the addition of the alkali in the fifth step.

27. (New) The method according to claim 25, wherein pH of the aqueous solution is adjusted to 11-13 by the addition of the alkali in the fifth step.

28. (New) A hydrogen-absorbing alloy produced according to the method of claim 2.

29. (New) A hydrogen-absorbing alloy produced according to the method of claim 3.

30. (New) A hydrogen-absorbing alloy produced according to the method of claim 4.

31. (New) A hydrogen-absorbing alloy produced according to the method of claim 5.

32. (New) A hydrogen-absorbing alloy produced according to the method of claim 6.

33. (New) A hydrogen-absorbing alloy produced according to the method of claim 7.

34. (New) A hydrogen-absorbing alloy produced according to the method of claim 8.

35. (New) A hydrogen-absorbing alloy produced according to the method of claim 11.

36. (New) A hydrogen-absorbing alloy produced according to the method of claim 12.

37. (New) A hydrogen-absorbing alloy produced according to the method of claim 13.